THE OYSTER TRADE OF NEW YORK.

Where do all the Hard Shells Come From

Extent of the Business in the Metropolis.

Five Billion Dollars Worth Sold Yearly, 20., &c., &c.

This is a business in which almost every person cels an interest, for there are very few who are not dependent upon it for one of the most important ar-ticles of human food. Oysters were at one time regarded as a luxury, but they have now be come almost as indispensible as tea or coffee with which our remote ancestors were but little acquainted. It is only within the last thirty years that the oyster trade was established in this ity. Before that time, it is true, oysters were sold here; but the business transacted was exceedingly imited, and t here was little or no inducement for persons to engage in it. Nearly all that were brought narket were procured from the natural beds, for the benefits to be obtained from planting were but imperfectly understood by a few of the dealers, or en-tirely unknown to them. In the course of a few years, however, the business grew into importance, and men of capital and enterprise engaged in it The planting of beds-a very essential part of the trade—was commenced; the few oyster boats, of diminutive size, engaged in supplying New York, be-came an immense fleet; an extensive trade began with Virginia; the East river became a mine of wealth to those who worked its beds; the coasts of our bays, and the shores of our rivers were explored and given over to the tongs, the scrapers, and the dredges of the oystermen. It was found that by removing the eyster from its natural bed to an artificial one, it could not only be increased in size, but improved in quality, and rendered fit for use at any period of the year. This was a very important matter to under; stand, for there are certain months when the oyster is unfit for use in consequence of its being full of spawn. While they remained in the natural bed they were always subject to this objection; but if

parts of the waters of this State. The importance of the oyster trade may be judged from the fact that the wholesale and retail sales exseed five millions of dollars annually, and more than afty thousand persons are employed in it. We inelude in this estimate those who are engaged on the beds, and in conveying them to market by boats, and the retail and wholesale dealers. The amount of capital invested in boats of all sizes is estimated at about five millions of dollars, and if we add to this the value of the beds themselves, the depots, &c., the amount would exceed twelve millions. We consider it necessary to state these few general facts, before going into the particulars of the trade, which we have arranged under appropriate heads.

not permitted to lie too long in the artificial one they

could be preserved free from spawn. Although they

increased in size, they seldom or never became more

numerous by transplanting. Hundreds of vessels are

constantly employed, during certain months, in trans-

planting in the East river, in Prince's Bay, and other

VIRGINIA OYSTERS. A large proportion of the oysters sold in and around Catherine Market are from Virginia. There is a certain part of the year in which they arrive in great quantities, and that is from about the fifteenth of November till the first of April. It would be a sedious task to enumerate all the varieties that come from that State, as there are no less than twenty-five er thirty. The whole sea-coast of Virginia is, in fact, one vast oyster-bed, and there is not a State in the Union which is more productive in this delicious shellfish. Thousands of persons are employed in the Asheries, and of these nearly all are slaves. They are engaged in taking the oysters from the beds, or, as they are called among the initiated, the "rocks." It must not be supposed from this, however, that they are found upon rocks, for in this instance, the term has a very different meaning from that which we generally attach to it. The " rock " from which the eysters are obtained is composed of common sea sand or mud, on the top of which they are distributed. These rocks are natural, that is, the oysters which grow upon them are not transplanted, as is the case with those brought from Prince's Bay, on the southern coast of Staten Island. The quality of the oysters, we may state here, depends as much upon the character of the sand or mud upon which it grows, as that of any ve-

getable upon the nature of the soil where it is planted.

The number of vessels employed during the sea-

between Nevember and April, in supplying

the dealers in Oliver slip and other depots in the city with Virginia oysters is about one thousand, each of which is valued at an average of three thousand dollars. The crew is composed, generally, of four hands and the cook, and the monthly wages given to each person varies from twelve to thirty dollars, according to his capacity. Unlike the sahermen of Fulton market, they do not own shares in the boats upon which they are employed, for their occupation is of a very different nature. They are not engaged in the fisheries, which, as we have stated, is conducted by another class of men, and their work partakes more of the character of sailors than that of fishermen. They are required, in the transplanting of a bed, to heave the oysters overboard. to clean the bed about once a year, and perform various other work of a like description. The cleaning of the beds takes place generally every fall, and is accomplished by means of "scrapers," a singular boking instrument, somewhat resembling a scythe, with this exception, that at one side of the blade a hrge bag, constructed of iron ringwork, like many purses we have seen, is attached. Into this all the scourings of the bed, cleaned off with the front of the blade, fall, and the whole is hauled up at reguher intervals and deposited in the boat, to be afterwards thrown into the current. In this manner the whole floor of the bed is scraped quite clean, after which it is considered fit for the reception of the cysters. The process of cleaning a bed is performed by the vessels under full sail, and it is not unusual to see several of them at work at the same time. It is a very laborious task, and those who are employed at it, we have no doubt, earn their wages. A great loss is sometimes incurred by what is called the "sanding" of oysters, that is, by their becoming imbedded in or covered over by the sand. This is caused by currents, or other agitation of the water, hifting the sand upon the oysters and smothering them. It may seem strange that oysters, or any shell fish which lies on the bottom, could be killed in this manner; but such we are informed is the fact, by those who have been a long time engaged in the oyster trade. They differ materially from soft shell clams in this respect, which are found sometimes at a depth of twelve or fourteen inches below the surface of the sand. When it is discovered that the ovsters are beginning to sand, the greatest despatch is requisite to save those that remain above the surface, for those below it are considered worthless. Out of ten thousand dollars' worth planted during a single season, cases have occurred in which one-fourth has been destroyed in this way. They do not, as a general thing, increase in numbers when transplanted from the "rock," or natural bed, to an artificial one, although they become much larger in the course of a few months. The instrument used in taking them up is called a pair of tongs, not at all like the fire utensil known by that name. We can form a very true conception of its appearance by supposing two gigantic rakes, or garden hoes, fastened together upon a pivot running through the centre of the two handles, and having the teeth so arranged as to interlock when brought close together. These are used almost invariably in small boats, and when thrown over the side the two rakes are drawn as far apart as possible, and then brought together again By this operation all the oysters lying within their

of the tongs, and afterwards thrown into the boat. The oyster companies have to pay about one dollar a year each for the privilege of planting in a portio

reach are, as it were, scooped up between the teeth

of Prince's Bay called Ward's Point, which is regard ed as admirably adapted for the purpose. As many as a million bushels of cysters are scattered in this favorite locality yearly; but it is the only part of the Bay for which the dealers are required to pay. Each company have their own ground marked out, and the whole space thus occupied extends over ten miles in length by about five in breadth. The depth of water varies from eight to twenty-five feet. Besides the Virginia oysters, there are several other kinds planted in this bay, among which are the East river and Delaware oysters. The time of planting is about the latter end of March, and they are allowed to remain till near the commencement of May, when they are taken up and conveyed to market. Some of the boats engaged in carrying them are only chartered by companies during the season of transplanting, as there is no steady business for them in this occupation the whole year round. These boats belong to persons doing business in this city and living on Staten Island;

some few are owned in Norfolk and other places.

The laws of Virginia are very strict in relation to the oyster fisheries, only those who are residents of the State being allowed the privilege of taking them during a certain period of the year. The particular law which refers to this subject is entitled "A law for the preservation of certain useful animals"-the "useful animals" in this case being oysters and terrapins. This law provides that any person, who is not a citizen, found taking oysters or terrapins in the waters of the State, or in the rivers Pocomoke or Potomac, shall be fined one hundred dollars. It is also very specific in regard to the manner in which they shall be taken, imposing a penalty of one hundred dollars upon any person who shall use any other instrument than a common oys-ter tongs with a bar or head not exceeding twenty three inches in length. The same law prohibits their exportation between the first day of May and the first day of September, punishing each offence with a fine of two hundred dollars.

This law is, doubtless, very necessary, when we consider the immense consumption of Virgina oys ters, not only in this State, but throughout the Union, which would, but for this salutary check, tend to depopulate the "rocks" of Virginia. The best cyster are those which come from Rappahannock and York rivers; but the quantity from these localities is very limited, as they are mostly consumed at home-Those that are brought to the New York market sell from seven to fifteen dollars a thousand, according to their quality. They are particularly remarkable for their great size, some of them being twice as large as the ordinary oyster.

The amount received for Virginia oysters sold by the dealers in Oliver slip alone is estimated at \$250,000 a year. This, however, is not more than one-third of the quantity disposed of in the vicinity of Catharine market; for the space in the slip is so limited that the business of the dealers is greatly retarded and cramped. In consequence of this, the principal supply is furnished direct from the boats to the retail dealers throughout the city. About five hundred thousand dollars worth of all kinds of Virginia oysters are sold by the boats, which, added to the sales of the dealers, make a total of three-quarters of a

ters are sold by the boats, which, added to the sales of the dealers, make a total of three-quarters of a million of dollars. This is an immense amount of money; but it is not more than one-eighth part of the value of all the oysters sold during the year in this city. A large proportion of these, it must be admitted, are exported to different parts of the United States, and some are even sent to England, as we have had occasion to remark, in our last article on Fulton market.

There are very few of the wholesale dealers in Oliver slip who are not part owners of the oyster bouts, and some companies own four or five. We should state here that, as a general thing, the captain has a share in the vessel under his command. When a supply of Virginia oysters is required for transplanting, one of the company is appointed an agent, with full power to purchase the necessary quantity. When he arrives at the "rocks," he anchors on any particular spot where experience tells him he can procure the oysters he wants. He then engages some of the oystermen to load his vessel at a stipulated price per bushel, agreeing to remain in one locality only so long as the oysters there continue good. Where the "rock" is remarkably fertile, an expert oysterman can "tong" fifty and sixty bushels a day, and when constantly employed he can carn twenty dollars each week. There are some months in which the business is partially suspended, and during that time he devotes his attention to other work. Nearly all of those employed on the oyster beds of Virginia are slaves, who are allowed by their masters to engage in this occupation on condition of paying them one dollar, and in some cases ten shillings a day, giving them all they make over that for their own use. There have been instances where the slave has, by perseverance and unremitting industry, realized in a few years sufficient to purchase his own freedom, and we were told of one who not only liberated himself in this way, but his wife and child also.

We have said that the York river and t

inferior, and, au contraire, at other times the York inferior, and au contraire, at other times the York rivers bear off the palm. Various causes may be assigned for this difference, but the most obvious is found in the fact that the waters of both rivers are liable to be affected by freshets, which materially change the quality of the oyster. Where the water is very fresh the oysters deteriorate, and not unfrequently die.

The number of boats engaged in conveying Virginia oysters to the various slips in this city is

The number of boats engaged in conveying Virginia oysters to the various slips in this city is stated at one thousand. The registers of these is from forty-five to two hundred tons, and the value from five hundred to eight thousand dollars. During the months of December, January, February, and March, about five hundred thousand dollars worth are sold from the boats at Coenties slip. There are no scows or oyster stands at this place, on account of the transient character of the trade there, and the dealers are consequently obliged to sell them off the boats. There are some days when from twenty to thirty vessels are in dock together, and on these occasions the scene presented is one of great activity and life. The wharf is thronged with wagons waiting to receive their loads, while the hands on board the boats are straining every nerve to supply the incessant demands of customers. The business of the day commences about six o'clock in the morning, and continues till four in the afternoon.

EAST AND NORTH RIVER OYSTERS. Of East river oysters alone, about five hundred thousand dollars worth is sold during the year in Oliver slip. The supply comes from Bridgeport Norwalk, Greenwich, Stamford, Darien, Sawpita City Island, and a few other places along the westtern shore; and from Northport, Oyster Bay, Lloyd's Harbor, Huntingdon, Cold Spring, and Cow Bay, on the southern side. The largest proportion comes from City Island, where there are extensive artificial and natural beds, which furnish some of the best oysters obtained in the East river.

The artificial beds cover a larger surface than the natural ones, which is owing to the fact that immense quantities of the North river oysters are also planted there. In fact, about one-third of the whole number planted is made up entirely of those ob-tained from different parts of the North river—the beds of which extend at intervals from Piermont to beds of which extend at intervals from Piermont to Sing Sing. The oysters from these beds are not fit for use till they are transplanted twice. They are, indeed a very inferior article; and, to use the language of one of the dealers, "they are considered behind the age." Above Sing Sing the water becomes so fresh that oysters cannot live in it, and sometimes, when there is a freshet in the river, large numbers of them, it is said, are killed. It is not considered judicious, therefore, to remove them from othe natural bed for the purpose of transplanting, as the sudden change from the fresh to sait water generally proves fatal to them. When they are first taken up, they are of a very diminutive size, some being not much larger than a shilling piece, and the largest do not exceed three inches in diameter. When young, the shell is quite soft, and if planted in Prince's Bay; in that state they would inevitably fall a prey to the large fish which inhabit its waters. They are, therefore, first planted in the East river beds, where they are allowed to remain for two years; and, when sufficiently large to defy their scaly foes, they are transallowed to remain for two years; and, when suffi-ciently large to defy their scaly foes, they are trans-ferred to Prince's Bay, or to other beds in the East

The North river is remarkably productive in this The North river is remarkably productive in this shellfish, and in some places so rapid is the increase that they grow upon the top of each other. In this manner layer after layer is formed, till a perfect rock of oyster shells has been constructed, from four to seven feet thick, and so hard that it is impossible to fasten an anchor in it. Each layer of oysters kills those immediately beneath it, for this fish always remains in the one spot. During the months of July and August there are very few brought to market, as they are generally full of spawn about this period of the year. This, it is almost needless to say, renders them unfit for eating, as it gives the meat a milky appearance, and some think an unpleasant flavor. We should state, however, that this is only the case with those obtained from the natural bed, or those artificial beds in which they are allowed

to remain, as the planted cysters are generally fit for use if not allowed to remain too long. When the eyster is in spawn it has a bloated lock, and if cut with a knife a thick diquid, somewhat resembling milk, exudes from it. There was formerly a law, we understand, in this State, prohibiting the cystermen from taking them up during three months, but that has either been annulled or become obselete. About twenty years ago the cysters from the East river were almost unknown in this city, except to a few lovers of the fish. Indeed, the cyster business of New York at that time was very limited, and, like many other trades, it has increased with the growth of the city. No person with large capital could be induced to enter upon it, and to cultivate artificial beds in our own waters, except a few, and even those were men of very small means. Eight or ten years ago, one dealer, who has since become exceedingly rich in the business, invested his capital in it determined to prove that New York could furnish as good cysters as any other State in the Union, not excepting Virginia, which had always maintained the first rank. Before this time the East river cysters had a very poor reputation, and, in fact, the demand for them was so very limited that the person who entered upon the experiment did so at considerable risk. As soon, however, as people became acquainted with their superior quality there was an immediate demand for them. If the beds were as extensive as those in Virginia, the quantity obtained from that State was considerably reduced. According to the present condition of the trade, and the constantly increasing demand, there is no reason to suppose that it will ever be diminished, or that New York waters alone can supply the New York markets. Besides, as we have already stated in another place, immense quantities are sent, not only throughout this State, but to California, and even to English, where they are considered by some superior to the oysters of that country. They are certainly more healthy and nutri

of the celebrated Hannibal Chollops, gets "most catawampously chawed up." The drum fish literally cuts the shell in two with lits teeth, and then extracts the oyster. It devours immense numbers in this manner, and did it frequent those waters during the whole year it would soon depopulate the beds. It only makes its appearance, however, about the month of August, so that the damage done is soon repaired by the remarkably prolific powers of the oyster itself. Besides the drum fish, there is the borer, which grows to the length of half an inch. It is remarkably hard, and at one end has a sharp point, by means of which it is enabled to pierce the shell of the oyster. There are some other fish that prey upon oysters, but these are the only kind whose extensive ravages entitle them to particular notice.

In addition to the twenty-five large boats or sloops owned by the oystermen of City Island, they have between seventy and eighty smaller ones. They generally commence their work in September, and continue till June; but during that month and the two succeeding ones their business is partially suspended. During these three months they employ their time in overhauling their boats or cultivating their ground, for some have small tracts of land upon which they raise different kinds of vegetables. There was formerly communication between the island and the main land by steamboats, but these have long since stopped running, and their place at present is supplied by the boats belonging to the oystermen themselves. City Island is a little world by itself, and its inhabitants have very little connection with the great and busy world outside of it.

It has a population of about four hundred, including women and children, and such is its present prosperous condition that its inhabitants are able to maintain an excellent school. A few years ago a small, but handsome, church was erected near the centre of the island, and its bells may be heard of a Sunday, on either side of the river, summoning the people to worship.

Some idea

and several other places, and some by steamboat from Cold Spring and Oyster Bay, L. I. Many private families living along the banks of the East river plant beds for their own use; but plantations of this description are not very extensive. A considerable business in these oysters is transacted in Boston, Hartford, and two or three other eastern cities, but they are said to be of an inferior quality. They bring a good price, however, in those places, and that is a sufficient inducement to the dealers to take them so far out of the way. far out of the way. SHREWSBURY OVSTERS.

Nearly all the Shrewsbury oysters sent to the New York market are obtained from artificial beds, planted from the natural "rock," in Newark Bay. There are no regular depots for their sale, as is the case with those from Virginia and the East river. The whole amount sold during a single year is estimated at four hundred thousand dollars, of which more than three hundred thousand dollars worth were bought directly from the boats. Besides those sent in the regular oyster boats, there are large quantities sent by steamboats. The principal supply is received during the spring and fall, but in the summer and winter months the business is very limit-ed. They can be purchased in market, however, all the year round, and there is generally a pretty brisk demand for them. Among epicures they are considered excellent eating, and by some they are regarded as equal to the best from Virginia. Those of a superior quality sell from ten to fifteen dollars a thousand; and when there is a scarcity in the market, they bring sixteen and eighteen dollars a thousand.

ket, they bring sixteen and eighteen dollars a thousand.

The number of men engaged in the cyster fisheries at Shrewsbury is computed at two hundred and fifty. Of these more than one-half are employed in transplanting from the natural bed in Newark bay to the artificial beds on the coast of Shrewsbury. It was in the waters of Newark, as our readers may remember, that the great cyster war occurred. The difficulty was caused, it was alleged, by the encroachments of the New York cystermen upon the beds of the Jerseyites. The former, supposing they had the same right as their antagonists to this part of the waters of New Jersey at least, had at various times loaded their boats with the cysters found therein. When notified, therefore, that only citizens of New Jersey were allowed this privilege, and that if they continued to violate the laws of the State a heavy penalty should be imposed, they treated the menace with contempt, and, in defiance of its laws and authority, persisted in taking the forbidden cysters. The Jersey cystermen, however, were determined to expel hem from their ground by force, and for this purposet absolutely provided some of their vessels with cannon. The Jerseyites were armed to the teth, and all were resolved to sacrifice their lives, if need be, in defence of their rights, their native shores, and their cysters. The New Yorkers, on the other hand, were no ways slow in preparing for the conflict, and for the time being there were dreadful rumors of war; but, fortunately, after a few encounters between two or three boats belonging to the belligerant parties, hostilities ceased. Several persons were injured in some of these naval engagements, but so far as we can recollect no one was killed. The whole affair ended in the expulsion of the New Yorkers from the prohibited waters; and they have since been content to purchase what they formerly obtained without expense, further than what was incurred by the labor of fishing for them.

No apprehensions need be entertained of another outbreak, as the sand.

The number of men engaged in the oyster fisher

ed. The beds cover an extent of between two and three miles, and are owned exclusively by the farmers who live along the banks of the Shrewsbury, who possess certain water privileges entitling them to plant as far as low water mark. The law, however, we believe, is not very strictly enforced in this case, for we are told that the beds extend across the river, which is between two and three hundred yards wide. When the tide recedes the oysters are exposed to view, and may be gathered with an ordinary pitchfork. The operation of "tonging" is only necessary with those that lie in the bed of the river, and therefore comparatively few boats are required. The larger part of those sent to New York are transported by steamboat. The farmers employ persons to take them up at low tide, and send them to market to be sold, on their own account. In some few instances they enter into a sort of partnership with oystermen owning sailboats, who obtain one-half the profite in consideration of the service rendered by them. This service consists in taking them from the beds with "tongs," and conveying them to this city.

There are two branches of the river in which they are planted, but those procured from the beds in the southern branch command a higher price. The bottom of the river is covered with a rich black mud, to the depth of from four to six feet, and it is this which gives the oyster its yellow color and peculiar flavor. The northern branch does not possess the same characteristic in so great a degree, and is therefore not so favorable for the purposes of planting. It is only those who are particularly nice and discriminating in their tastes, however, who can tell the difference between the product of either branch. They sell at an average of eighteen dollars a thousand, and when scarce they cannot be purchased for less than twenty.

an average of eighteen dollars a thousand, and when scarce they cannot be purchased for less than twenty.

It may be reasonably supposed that a farm on the borders of the Shrewsbury, with such valuable water privileges as those we have described, would realize a fortune in a short time for its proprietor. An oyster bed there is almost as valuable as a gold mine, less injurious to health, and easier to work. Their owners are not only "well to do in the world," but are considered by those in the trade wealthy. They are not required to pay any tax for their privileges, and there is very little risk attending their business, compared with that to which others are subject. About two hundred thousand dollars worth are sold during the year, and this amount is inadequate to the demand. There is no possibility of an increase in the supply, however, for the only part of the river capable of growing them is already laid out in beds, and its productive powers are now taxed to their fullest extent.

The trade in Shrewsbury oysters differs very materially from all others; there are less oystermen engaged in it, in consequence of a large portion being sent to this city by steamers in place of sloops and other sailboats. The capital invested in it is perhaps less, in proportion to the value of the article, than that invested in the East river and Virginia trades, and the profits derived from it are more considerable. The proportion of the value of the article, than that invested in the East river and Virginia trades, and the profits derived from it are more considerable.

and the profits derived from it are more considerable. The proprietors of the beds, it is particularly worthy of remark, combine the two very dissimilar occupations of farmers and oyster dealers.

BLUE POINT AND SOUND OYSTERS. About twenty years ago, the oysters from Blue Point were considered the best sold in this city, and they formed the staple at that time. A great change has since taken place, however, and the supply is as limited as that of the Shrewsburys. At one time, from some cause, of which little is known, they disappeared altogether, and none could be obthey disappeared altogether, and none could be obtained from the beds. The race of "Blue Pointers" were thought to be extinct; but they appeared again in as unaccountable a manner as they had disappeared. It is supposed that their apparent annihilation was caused by some change in the water, or in the nature of the rock upon which they grew. Another reason given for it is not at all improbable, and, to our mind, more satisfactory than either of those adduced—it is, that their destruction was occasioned by the filling up of the beds with sand. This, it is well known, is most fatal to oysters, and many still continue to be killed in the same manner. Blue Point is adjacent to South Amboy, and the beds extend over an area of from eight to ten miles. The value of the whole amount taken up in one year does not exceed two hundred thousand dollars. They are sold for an average of ten shillings a hundred from the beds; but, as they are scarce, and have a good reputation, they sell at a considerable advance upon this price when brought to market. At one period, when they might be regarded as in their prime, they attained a rémarkable size; but now their proportions, as well as their numbers, have been greatly reduced.

There are about two hundred persons engaged in the business, including the proprietors and the hands employed in werking the beds. The oysters are taken up during the months of Sentember. October. tained from the beds. The race of "Blue Pointers"

there are about two hondred persons engaged in are business, including the proprietors and the hands employed in working the beds. The oysters are taken up during the months of September, October, and November, and are all disposed of to the New York dealers.

and November, and are all disposed of to the New York dealers.

The Sound cysters are procured from beds lying on the south side of Staten Island, in an estuary which has been digrafted with the name of a sound. The beds are principally artificial, and are planted with the natural growth of Newark Bay. The cysters of Newark Bay are generally classed under the title of Sound cysters, and we have included them in our estimate of the amount of yearly sales as such. Occasionally, a few are brought from the Delaware Bay; but those obtained from that locality have a poor reputation, and are regarded as inferior to the growth of our own waters. For this reason, not more than one-sixth of the whole amount cultivated are Delawares. There are from one hundred and fifty to two hundred men employed in their cultivation, or in bringing them to market, and the value of the whole amount sold during the year does not exceed fifty thousand dollars. The boats used in transplanting and in transporting them to this city are sloops and skiffs, or open boats, each being manned by three or four bands. or open boats, each being manued by three or four hands. The average value of each boat is about ten hundred dollars, and the whole amount of capital invested in the Sound trade, including boats and beds, may be estimated at two hundred and tifty

YORK BAY OYSTERS.

The oysters known by this name are taken from the natural beds in Newark Bay, and planted over a portion of our bay extending from Jersey City as far down as South Amboy. A considerable proportion are obtained from the North river, but the Jersey oystermen, by whom they are planted, are obliged to pay for them before they are permitted to remove them from the natural beds, which are in the possession of New Yorkers. Before the late difficulty, session of New Yorkers. Before the late difficulty, however, we believe the beds were free to the Jerseymen, but since then they have not been permitted to approach them except for the purpose of buying oysters. There are at least ten hundred men employed in cultivating these oysters for the purpose of shipping them. The hardness of their shell, and the peculiar saltness of the meat, render them better adapted for shipping than any others, and they are therefore used almost wholly for the Western trade. The boats employed in transporting them from the North River and Newark Bay to the artificial beds, are open, and are each generally manned by three or four men. These men are the principal owners of the boats, and their attention is devoted exclusively to the cultivation of oysters for the marby three or four men. These men are the principal owners of the boats, and their attention is devoted exclusively to the cultivation of oysters for the market of this city. Their beds are staked out—that is, the limits of each are marked by its owner with stakes. This is very necessary, as it prevents the occurrence of disputes among the various owners, in relation to the extent of bottom occupied by them. It sometimes happens that the stakes are torn up by storms, and that the boundaries are in this manner effaced; but it very seldom happens that any serious difficulties occur in consequence. The beds ar marked out again, and even if one should have the advantage of the other, in the new limitation, no unpleasant feeling is caused by it. These men work in sloops and skiffs owned by themselves. The movers of each beat are also proprietors of one o more beds planted by themselves. There is about two hundred boats altogether, each of which is valued at an average of eight hundred dollars.

BUSHELS, CULLINS, BOXES, AND EXTRAS. These are the names given to the four sizes accord ing to which oysters are assorted after their remova from the bed. The bushels are the smallest, and o an inferior quality, while the extras are the largest, and sell for a higher price. The cullins and boxes are the intermediate sizes, the latter being next to

the extras. The following table gives the relative value of each:-

The extras sometimes grow to the enormous size of twelve inches, and they have been known to attain eighteen inches in diameter. Their average, how. ever, is not more than nine inches. Bushel oysters are shout one half the size of an extra, and the others vary in proportion between these two. Extras have been sold for eighteen and twenty dollars a thousand, and when scarce they have realized a higher price. There are some beds on which the growth of oysters is so diminutive that they do not furnish extras, no matter how long they may be allowed to remain undisturbed. They are generally oysters of four years' growth, for this is about the period an oyster takes to attain its full size. After that time they commence growing less, until they finally die out. It is a most singular fact that their death is caused by the increasing thickness of the shell. are about one half the size of an extra, and the

shell.

From the time they have attained their maturity till their death, the shell becomes thicker upon the inside as well as on the exterior. In this way it include as well as on the exterior. In this way it encroaches upon the space of the oyster, gradually reducing it in size, till it dwindles down to a fourth of its former dimensions.

The box oysters are a two years' growth, and there

are more of them sold than of any other size. It may be remarked, however, that as, a general, thing the size of the cyster depends as much upon the quality of the sand or mud upon which it grows as on the

THE WHOLESALE AND RETAIL OYSTER DEALERS Under this head may be classed those who sell oysters from the boats and scows at Oliver and Coenties slip, and the docks in front of Washington market, and also the dealers in the various markets throughout the city, the keepers of oyster saloons and restaurants. Of the wholesale dealers, a considerable number own boats and plant their own beds. All the oysters in Prince's Bay, and a large proportion of those in the East river, Newark Bay, and in other parts

rember own boats and plant their own beds. All the oysters in Prince's Bay, and a large proportion of those in the Eastriver, Newark Bay, and in other parts of the waters of this State, are planted by the dealers doing business in New York. Many of these have grown wealthy in the business, and own splendid country houses and extensive estates on Staten Island. In fact, the prosperity and rapid increase of the population of that island is owing, in a considerable degree, to the oyster trade of this city. Before Prince's Bay was laid out in oyster plantations there were very few persons living on it, and it was almost wholly uncultivated. As soon, however, as the planting commenced, the population received an accession from the oystermen, who took up their habitation on the coast, within view of the plantations upon which they worked. A few years after the first beds were planted an extent of coast of from five to ten miles was coverediwith oysters, taken from the "recks" of Virginia. The number of men employed upon them, who live upon the island, with their families, is computed at three thousand.

Of the wholesale dealers, many have worked upon the beds in Prince's Bay as dredgers; yet, by persoverance, economy, and industry, they have in some instances amassed immense fortunes. They are an enterprising and intelligent class of men, and the histories of some of them are full of interest. Some people imagine that there is very little in this business either interesting or instructive, and eat their oysters without ever bestowing a thought upon those by whose labor they have been provided with them. There is no occupation that is wholly barren of interest, and this fact is particularly applicable to the oyster dealers. We were informed of one who commenced in business, while a boy of eighteen, with a skiff which he had purchased on credit. The boat was worth about forty thousand's Signey of the storage of oysters and are engaged in bringing oysters from Virginia or in planting them in Prince's Bay.

There are sev

lars. This estimate is obtained from a calculation of the number of boats arriving during each year and their capacity.

The scows are all roofed over, and contain an office at one end. The hold where the cysters are placed is divided into a number of compartments for the reception of the different varieties and sizes. They are all sold in the shell, while those sold by the retail dealers are opened. During the fall there is, perhaps, a larger amount of cysters consumed than at any other season of the year, while in the summer there is a great falling off in the sales.

The cyster trade of Oliver slip is not so extensive as that of the dealers doing business in the dock opposite to Washington market. There are twelve scows in this dock, the value of which is about fifteen thousand dollars. They are very handsomely fitted up, and strongly built. This is very necessary, as they are subject to much damage on account of their exposed situation. There is no pier to break the strength of the waves; and when there is a heavy swell in the river they are knocked against each other with sufficient force to stove in the side of an ordinary boat. A few weeks ago, a scow was sunk in this place, and several hundred dollars worth of cysters lost, besides the damage done to the acow itself. The dealers make grevious complaints of the manner is which their interests are neglected. They are put to an expense of over six thousand dollars a-year, they say, by the want of proper accommodations for the boats, being compelled to land their cysters at a considerable distance from the seews, to which they have to be brought in carts.

There is one dealer here who sells his cysters open, and who sends immense quantities to the western part of this State and to some of the principal cities of the West. The slipments of another amounted to four thousand five hundred barrels. These, however, were in the shell, and were obtained from York Bay. Each barrel contains from five to six hundred cysters, and the price varies from four to five doll

and the price varies from four to five dollars. It is only within the last five or six years that the dealers commenced shipping them in the shell, and at present a most extensive trade is carried on with Cincin nati, St. Louis, and several other Western cities. Before this they were sent in kegs, hermetically sealed, to preserve them from the air. There is considerable skill and experience required in this department of the business, for great risk is incurred by carcless packing. During the first year considerable loss was sustained by the dealers, in consequence of their inexperience in the art of preserving them. They have now, however, attained to such perfection that they can be sent as far as California without receiving any material damage.

There are only two dealers who are engaged in extensive shipments of York Bay oysters, and the amount shipped by these during the fall and spring, is computed at twelve thousand dollars. The barrels used for this purpose are of the same kind as those employed in stowing flour. They are sent by railroad and canal; but more are perhaps sent by the latter, as it is a much cheaper mode of transportation.

The sales in and about the slip at Washington market is estimated at three millions of dollars. This includes the total value of all the oysters sold in the twelve scows and off the boats to the retail dealers in the market and throughout the city.

The persons engaged in the retail oyster business—by which we mean the keepers of saloons and restaurants in which oyaters are sold—may be estimated at fire thousand, and this we think is rather under than ever the number. Those realize a profit of from twenty-five to fifty per cent, so that the amount paid by the consumers in this city alone is about five millions of dollars. Some of the retail dealers may view to fifty per cent, so that the amount paid by the consumers in this city alone is about five millions of dollars. Some of the retail dealers may view to fifty per cent, so that the amount paid by the consumers in th

RECAPITULATION. OYSTER BOATS.

There are every variety of oyster boats, from the open skiff of ten tons to the schooner of two or three undred. The largest craft are employed in conveying oysters from Virginia and from the most dis-tant beds in the East river, while the smaller kind do not go further than twenty or thirty miles from New York. The open boats are principally owned by the men working in the beds, and form the largest proportion of the whole number. The following table exhibits the number employed in bringing systers to New York, or in transplanting them from the "rocks" to the artificial beds. Of course we do not include in this estimate the row-boats and skiffs engaged in the Virginia fisheries, and which never make their appearance in our waters:— Number of boats, of all sizes, from fifty to two hundred and fifty tons, employed in the trade in Vir

largest proportion of the whole number. The following table exhibits the number employed in bringing oysters to New York, or in transplanting them from the "rocks" to the artificial beds. Of course we do not include in this estimate the row-boats and skiffs engaged in the Virginia fisheries, and which never make their appearance in our waters:—

Number of boats, of all sizes, from fifty to two hundred and fifty tons, employed in the trade in Virginia oysters.

1,000 In the East and North river trade.

200 In the Shrewsbury trade.

200 In the Shrewsbury trade.

200 In the York Bay tra 

TABLE EXHIBITING THE YEARLY AMOUNT OF SALES OF ALL KINDS OF OYSTEES, BY THE WHOLESALE Sales of Virginia oysters, including those planted in Prince's Bay. \$3,000,000
Sales of East and North river oysters. 1,500,000
Of Shrewzbury oysters. 200,000
Of Blue Point and Sound oysters. 200,000
Of York Bay oysters. 300,000

NEW YORK COMMON COUNCIL.

OFFICIAL.

Beated Scanton.

Board or Albanus, March 11, 1868.

Present—Richard T Compton, Esq., President; Aldermen Moore Haley, Starievant, Oakley, Beyoe, Berrievant, Oakley, Beyoe, Berrievant, Oakley, Damman, Cornell Alvord.

The minutes of the last two meetings were read and approved.

By the PRISIDENT—Petition of Courtney Church, for remission of tax To Committee on Pinance.

By the same—Still of H T. Riggs, for medical serviced at the Third ward station house. To Committee on Pinance.

at the Third ward station house. To Committee on Police.

By the same—Bill of Commissary General Daniel Lee, for ammunition furnished on the 22d of February last. To Committee on Finance.

By Alderman Haldy—Perition of E. D. Morgan & Co., and other doing busines in the vicinity of pier No. 2d East river, to allow the occupants of said pier to creek a shed thereon. To Committee on Wharves, &c.

By Alderman Alwon—Petition of Edward Murray and others, to have sunten lets filled in on west side of Birth avenue, between Ferty ninth and Fifty first streets. To Committee on Public Health.

By Alderman DENAN—Petition of Clement C. Moore, to build three piers in the Hudson river, between Nineteenth and Twenty fourth streets. To Committee on Wharves, Piers and Slips.

By Alderman DENANN—Petition of Wm. Dunning, for lease of property at Manhattanville. To Committee on Finance.

By the same—Petition of Mr. Sanders, to be remune—

Wharves, Piers and Sips.

By Alderman Themans—Petition of Wm. Dunning, for lease of property at Manhattanville. To Committee on Finance.

By the same—Petition of Mr. Sanders, to be remunerated for damages sustained while in discharge of his duties as a freman. To Committee on Finance.

By the same—Fetition of John Quinn, for extension of time to build sever on Seventh avenue and Forty-sixth street. To Committee on Sewers.

By the same—Fetition of Heary Dreber and others, for a saver through Ridge street, to connect with sewer in Stanton street. To Committee on Sewers.

By Alderman Rame—Fetition of Joseph Carliale, to be remunerated for damages done to his house by Magine Company No. 9. To Committee on Finance.

By Alderman Rame—Fetition of Joseph Carliale, to be remunerated for damages done to his house by Magine Company No. 9. To Committee on Finance.

By Alderman Rame—Fetition of John Gourgas, Jr., for pay as inspector on the regulation of Fifty-fifth street, between Kinth avenue and Hudsen river. To Committee on Roads.

By Ald. ALVORD—That both sidewalks on Thirty-fourth street, between Fourth and Eight avenues, be lagged with fingging four feet wide, under the direction of the Street.

By the same—Resolved, That permission is hereby granted to the owners of property on Thirty-fourth street, between Fifth and Madison avenues, to build a sever in said street, at their own expense, provided the same is done in accordance with the rules, and under the direction of the Croton Aqueduct Department. Adopted.

By Ald. Warn—Excived That the Commissioner of Repairs and Supplies cause the sump in Fourth street, corner of Sixth avenue, in the Fifteenth ward, to be repaired at once. Referred to Commissioner of Repairs and Supplies cause the sump in Fourth street, corner of Sixth avenue, in the Fifteenth ward, to be repaired at once. Referred to Commissioner of Repairs and Supplies cause the sum of Fifth street. Adopted.

By Ald. Connell—Resolved, That the Commissioner of Repairs and Supplies cause the sum of Fifth street

at the corner of First avenue and Fifth street. Adopted,
FROM DEPARTMENTS.

A communication was received from the Croten Aqueduct Department, in relation to a sewer in Fifty-first street, between Ninth avenue and Hudson river. Referred to Committee on Sewers; subsequently, the refurence reconsidered, and the resolution adopted.

A communication was received from the Comptroller in relation to the new building of the city Armory, corned of Elm and White streets. Referred to Committee of Repairs and Supplies.

A communication was received from the Croten Aqueduct Department, in relation to building of new, and repairing old man holes, on the lines of the Sixth and kighth avenue railroads. Referred to Committee on Sawers.

duct Pepartment, in relation to building of new, and repairing old man bales, on the lines of the Sixth and Eighth avenue railreads. Referred to Committee on Sawers.

By Alderman Alvord—Resolved, That the vacant lots of block bounded by Thirty-thir's and Thirty-fourth street, and Fourth and Fifth avenues, be fenced in under the direction of the Street Commissioner. Referred to Commissioner on Streets.

By the same—Feedwed, That the vacant lots in the block of ground bounded by Thirty-fourth and Thirty-fifth streets and Fourth and Fifth avenues, be fenced in, under the direction of the Street Commissioner. Referred to Commissioner on Streets.

FROM BOARD OF ASSISTAYS.

Resolution—That the clerk of the Common Council be directed to alter the names of Andrew Turnler, of Hose Company No. 45, and of Abraham Relay, on the Firemen's Register from expelled to resigned. To Commistee on Fire Department.

Recolution—That permission be given to the Floating Pry Bock Company to close pile the easterly side of pler No. 42 East River, and to place spring piles on the end of the same, so as to prevent the wheels and guards of steamboats from catching on the pier, the same to be done at their own cost and expense. To Committee on Wharves, Fiers and Silps.

Resolution—That 500 copies of the Comptroller's Annual Report to the City Inspector be bound for the use of the members of the Common Council and the Heads of Departments. Committee on Finance—In favor of remitting tax of Jampton P. Hewell. To Committee on Third and Fourth avenues. In Committee on Reads—In favor of the astual opening of 120th street, between Fourth and Sixth avenues. Its Committee on Reads—In favor of placing railings on each side of Tenth avenue, Indivendent on Finance—In favor of committee on Reads—Report of Committee on Reads—In favor of placing railings on each side of Tenth avenue, Ira Committee on Finance—In favor of committee on Reads—Report of Committee on Finance—In favor of Placing Tax on James Jenoings To Committee on Finance—In favor of Committee

en Markets.

Report of Committee on Fire Department—In favor of paying bill for medical services to Robert Roulaton, for injuries received at a fire. To Committee on Fire De-

paying bill for medical services to Robert Roulston, for injuries received at a fire. To Committee on Fire Department.

Report of Committee on Sewers—In favor of building a sewer in Thirty seventh street, between Madison avenue and Fourth avenue. To Committee on Sewers.

Resolved, that the Commissioner of Repairs and Supplies be, and he is hereby directed, to have the crosswalk corner of Marion and Broome streets, relaid. To Committee on streets

Resignation of Jos. W. Jones, as Commissioner of Deeds, and resolution appointing Edward S. McPherson in his place. Resignation accepted and resolution adopted by said Board, were referred to the Committee on Salaries and Offices.

Report of Committee on Finance—In favor of reducing tax of F. Hyde. To Committee on Finance.

Report of Committee on Finance—In favor of remitting tax of Alphonse Perier. To Committee on Finance.

Petition of Engine Company No. 7, to have the word "expelled," opposite the names of J. A. Rosenbrook and Isaac Fiercon, changed to recigned, granted by sald Board. To Committee on Fire Department.

Report of Committee on Sewers—In favor of building a sewer in Mott street, from Pell to Walker street. To Committee on Sewers.

Of Committee on Roads—In favor of releasing B. A. Cushman from payment of interest on assessment for ever in Forty eighth street. Lost for want of a constitutional majority, subsequently reconsidered, and lost again.

on motion, the Board then adjourned until Monday, the 14th instant, at 5 o'clock, P. M.
D. T. VALENTINE, Clerk.

BOARD OF ASSESTANT AUDIENES,
FRIDAY, March 11, 1863.
Present—Alderman Woodward, in the chair, and Ass
tant Aldermen Tait, Maybee, Breaden, Ring, Hant, Boute
McGown, Stewart, Wheelan, Barker, Rogers, the Pri
dent, Crawford, O'Keefe and McConkey,
RESOLUTIONS.

dent, Crawford, O Recta and Allocations.

By Assistant Alderman Wirghtan—That the crosswall from southeast corner of Mulberry and Spring street to southwest corner be reflagged. To Committee of

Streets.

By Assistant Alderman Tarr—That the Croton water bt introduced into the office of the Clerk of the Board of Assistants. Adopted.

By Assistant Alderman Marrar—That Dey street, between Greenwich and West streets, be lighted with gas.

Adopted.

By Assistant Alderman Hunt—Preamble with the fol-

By Assistant Alderman Hunt—Preamble with the fol-lowing resolutions:—
Resolved, That the editors and proprietors of the Sunday Allas be summoned to appear at the bar of the Board of Assistant Aldermen, and, under oath, disclose to this Board, and to the whole city, the name of the vile mem-ber of the Common Council alluded to in the above ex-ract from their journal, and answer all other questions that may be prepounded by them; and, finally, Resolved, That George Law, Kipp and Brown, Alders-man A. A. Penman, and Oliver Charlock be summoned to appear at the bar of the Board of Assistant Aldermen, and answer such questions as may be put to them, under oath.

and answer such questions as may be put to them, under oath.

The subject as to statements against members of the Common Council having been referred to a special committee, on motion of Assirkant Alderman Harkes, the presentle and resolutions were laid on the table.

By Assistant Alderman McConkry—That the Croton water mains be extended from their present termination in Thirty-ninth street, down to the Hudson river, Adopted.

By Assistant Alderman O'KEFFS—Bill of Dr. Hepburn, for medical attendance at Nineteenth ward police station. To Committee on Police.

By Assistant Alderman Syswarz—That Clinton and Attorney streets, between Grand and Division, be lighted with gas. Adopted.

REFORMS.